

## 25 The participles

### 274 The present (or active) participle

#### Form

The infinitive + **ing**, e.g. *working, loving, sitting, standing, worrying* (see 162).

#### Use

#### A As an adjective:

*running water   floating wreckage   dripping taps  
growing crops*

#### B To form the continuous tenses:

*he is working   you have been dreaming   we are being followed*

#### C After verbs of sensation (see 272):

*I saw flames rising and heard people shouting.*

*I heard him booking seats.*

*Every day I see them passing the house.*

*I smell something burning.*

*I saw him kissing her.*

*You can hear the clock ticking.*

*I felt the house shaking.*

#### D **catch/find** + object + present participle:

*I caught them stealing my apples* (I found them doing this bad thing).

*If she catches you reading her diary, she'll be furious.*

The action expressed by the participle is always one which displeases the subject.

With **find** there is no feeling of displeasure:

*I found him standing at the door* = I saw him standing at the door/He was standing at the door when I arrived.

With **find** the object could be inanimate:

*He found a tree lying across the road.*

#### E **have** + object + present participle:

1 *I'll have him driving after two lessons* = As a result of my efforts he will be driving after two lessons.

*He had me swimming in a week* = As a result of his efforts I was swimming in a week.

**have** here is not normally used in the continuous tenses, or in the negative.

- 2 **have** + object + present participle can also be used as in:  
*There is a bus stop outside our door so we have people standing on our steps all day*

= *There is a bus stop outside our door so people stand/are standing on our steps all day.*

This is chiefly used of actions which annoy the speaker.

(See 118 B.)

- 3 Note also:

*I won't have him cleaning his bicycle in the kitchen* = I won't allow him to clean his bicycle in the kitchen.

**have** here can be used in any tense.

- F **spend/waste** + an expression of time or money + present participle:

*He spends two hours travelling a day.*

*He doesn't spend much time preparing his lessons.*

*We wasted a whole afternoon trying to repair the car.*

*He spent a lot of money modernizing the house.*

- G **be busy** + present participle:

*She is/was busy packing.*

- H A participle may introduce a statement in indirect speech (see 305 C).

## 275 A present participle can replace a sentence or main clause

- A When two actions by the same subject occur simultaneously it is usually possible to express one of them by a present participle. The participle can be before or after the finite verb:

*He rode away. He whistled as he went.*

= *He rode away whistling.*

*He holds the rope with one hand and stretches out the other to the boy in the water*

= *Holding the rope with one hand, he stretches etc.*

- B When one action is immediately followed by another by the same subject the first action can often be expressed by a present participle. The participle must be placed first:

*He opened the drawer and took out a revolver*

= *Opening the drawer he took out a revolver.*

*She raised the trapdoor and pointed to a flight of steps*

= *Raising the trapdoor she pointed to a flight of steps.*

*We take off our shoes and creep cautiously along the passage*

= *Taking off our shoes we creep cautiously along the passage.*

It would seem more logical here to use the perfect participle and say *Having opened, Having raised, Having taken off*, but this is not necessary except when the use of the present participle might lead to ambiguity. *Eating his dinner he rushed out of the house* would give the impression that he left the house with his plate in his hand. Here therefore it would be better to say *Having eaten his dinner . . .*

- C When the second action forms part of the first, or is a result of it, we can express the second action by a present participle:

*She went out, slamming the door.*

*He fired, wounding one of the bandits.*

*I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it.* (Here we have three actions, the last two expressed by participles.)

The participle need not necessarily have the same subject as the first verb:

*The plane crashed, its bombs exploding as it hit the ground.*

## 276 A present participle can replace a subordinate clause

- A The present participle can replace **as/since/because** + subject + verb, i.e. it can help to explain the action which follows:

*Knowing that he wouldn't be able to buy food on his journey he took large supplies with him* = As he knew etc.

*Fearing that the police would recognize him he never went out in daylight* = As he feared etc.

Note that **being** at the beginning of a sentence will normally mean 'as he is/as he was':

*Being a student he was naturally interested in museums* = Because/As he was a student etc. It could not mean 'While he was a student'.

The subject of the participle need not be the same as the subject of the following verb:

*The day being fine, we decided to go swimming*

but in cases like this the participle must follow its noun/pronoun.

*Being fine the day, we decided* is incorrect, but *Being athletic, Tom found the climb quite easy* is all right, as Tom is the subject of both the participle and the following verb.

It is possible to use two or more participles, one after the other:

*Realizing that he hadn't enough money and not wanting to borrow from his father, he decided to pawn his watch.*

*Not knowing the language and having no friends in the country, he found it impossible to get a job.*

- B A present participle can frequently replace a relative clause (see 55 C):

*People who wish to visit the caves . . .*

= *People wishing to visit the caves . . .*

*Children who need medical attention . . .*

= *Children needing medical attention . . .*

*A map which marks the political boundaries . . .*

= *A map marking the political boundaries . . .*

## 277 The perfect participle active

Form: **having** + past participle, e.g. *having done*, *having seen*.

Use: The perfect participle can be used instead of the present participle in sentences of the type shown in 275 B (i.e. where one action is immediately followed by another with the same subject):

*Tying one end of the rope to his bed, he threw the other end out of the window*

= *Having tied one end of the rope to his bed, he threw the other end etc.*

The perfect participle emphasizes that the first action is complete before the second one starts, but is not normally necessary in combinations of this kind, except when the use of the present participle might lead to confusion:

*Reading the instructions, he snatched up the fire extinguisher* might give the impression that the two actions were simultaneous. Here, therefore, the perfect participle would be better:

*Having read the instructions, he snatched up the fire extinguisher.*

The perfect participle is however necessary when there is an interval of time between the two actions:

*Having failed twice, he didn't want to try again.*

It is also used when the first action covered a period of time:

*Having been his own boss for such a long time, he found it hard to accept orders from another.*

## 278 The past participle (passive) and the perfect participle passive

- A Form: the past participle of regular verbs is formed by adding **ed** or **d** to the infinitive, e.g. *worked*, *loved*. For the past participle of irregular verbs see 317.

Use:

- 1 As an adjective:

*stolen money   a written report   fallen trees   broken glass*

- 2 To form the perfect tenses/infinitives and participles and the passive voice:  
*he has seen to have loved it was broken*
- 3 The past participle can replace a subject + passive verb just as the present participle can replace subject + active verb:  
*She enters. She is accompanied by her mother.*  
 = *She enters, accompanied by her mother.*  
*He was aroused by the crash and leapt to his feet*  
 = *Aroused by the crash, he leapt to his feet.*  
*The bridge had been weakened by successive storms and was no longer safe*  
 = *Weakened by successive storms, the bridge was no longer safe*  
 or *Having been weakened etc. (see below).*  
*As he was convinced that they were trying to poison him, he refused to eat anything*  
 = *Convinced that they were trying to poison him, he refused etc.*
- B The perfect participle passive (**having been** + past participle) is used when it is necessary to emphasize that the action expressed by the participle happened before the action expressed by the next verb:  
*Having been warned about the bandits, he left his valuables at home* = He had been warned etc.  
*Having been bitten twice, the postman refused to deliver our letters unless we chained our dog up* = He had been bitten etc.

### **279** Misrelated participles

A participle is considered to belong to the noun/pronoun which precedes it:

*Tom, horrified at what he had done, could at first say nothing.*

*Romeo, believing that Juliet was dead, decided to kill himself.*

*A man carrying a large parcel got out of the bus.*

Note that the participle may be separated from its noun/pronoun by a main verb:

*Jones and Smith came in, followed by their wives.*

*She rushed past the policeman, hoping he wouldn't ask what she had in her suitcase.*

If there is no noun/pronoun in this position the participle is considered to belong to the subject of the following main verb:

*Stunned by the blow, Peter fell heavily* (Peter had been stunned).

*Believing that he is alone, the villain expresses his thoughts aloud.*

If this principle is disregarded confusion results. *Waiting for a bus a brick fell on my head* makes it appear that the brick was waiting

for a bus, which is nonsense. A participle linked in this way to the wrong noun/pronoun is said to be 'misrelated'. The above sentence should be rewritten *As I was waiting for a bus a brick fell on my head.*

Other examples of misrelated participles:

*When using this machine it must be remembered . . .*

Correct form: *When using this machine you must remember . . .*

*Believing that I was the only person who knew about this beach, the sight of someone else on it annoyed me very much.*

Correct form: *As I believed I was the only person etc.*

## 280 Present participle adjectives and past participle adjectives

Care must be taken not to confuse these. Present participle adjectives, e.g. *amusing, tiring, horrifying*, are active, and mean 'having this effect'. Past participle adjectives, e.g. *amused, tired, bored*, are passive, and mean 'affected in this way'.

*The play was boring.      The audience was bored.*

*The work was tiring.      The workers soon became tired.*

*The scene was horrifying.      The spectators were horrified.*

*An infuriating woman (she made us furious).*

*An infuriated woman (something had made her furious).*